

# Ideas for Preventing Serious Incidents

One of the priorities generally included in the mission/vision for any agency/provider is assuring various safeguards are established to keep people with developmental disabilities safe from serious harm. There are certain strategies or actions that can be taken by community agencies to prevent or minimize some types of serious incidents from occurring. Included on the next few pages is a listing of various ideas to discuss with administrators, managers, support staff, people with disabilities, families, etc. and to consider implementing within your organization in order to assure that various safeguards to protect people from harm are in place.



*These ideas have been developed by the Health and Safety Committee of the Rhode Island Quality Consortium with input from members of the full Consortium. They are not intended to be all inclusive but rather a document to generate some discussion for the development of other ideas for consideration and strategies to implement within any organization.*

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## TRAINING

- Specify the *PRIORITIES* for staff training...*Human Rights, Preventing Incidents, Recognizing the Signs/Symptoms of Abuse, Reporting Abuse, etc.*
- Educate staff at ALL levels about the importance of protecting people from harm
- Provide a leadership focus on staff training/professional development...and the inclusion of situational examples to educate people to make better decisions regarding safe and unsafe practices
- Have staff from the Office of Quality Assurance, DDD, provide training to staff from agencies on reporting incidents and ideas for preventing serious incidents
- Ensure that new staff are really informed about each person with a disability they are supporting in terms of the person's individual needs, safety issues, specific goals, health concerns, etc. so that people have individual attention to their personal, psychological and recreational needs
- Include more role playing within training programs...*people learn better that way*
- Educate staff to be more aware of "*red flags/warning signs of potential abuse*"



and strategies to prevent incidents/problems

- Develop ongoing and realistic training programs for people with disabilities on *Recognizing and Assessing Unsafe Situations*...encourage people to talk about how they would handle specific risky situations
- Utilize the "*STOP, GO, TELL*" training or something comparable with people with disabilities
- Assess the quality of various training and the effectiveness of trainers to ensure competency (develop and review evaluation forms completed by participants attending training)
- Provide training to Direct Support Professional's on the history, mission and development of the community based service system for adults with developmental disabilities in RI.
- There should be more creative Human Rights training that challenges all staff such as the RI play "*THE PRICE OF RIGHTS*". Such training and *discussion* will support that segment of staff who intrinsically desire to better the lives of those we all serve.
- Ensure all staff are trained and understand their responsibilities in the following areas: *Reporting Abuse, Sexuality Issues, Personal Care, Human Rights, etc.*
- Educate people with disabilities on Human Rights, Sexuality, Reporting Abuse and on improving their capacities for communicating
- Provide training for van drivers on *Reporting Abuse* and the RI laws to protect the human rights of people with disabilities

- Provide fire safety training for people living in apartments/homes
- Ensure staff are trained on appropriate boundaries for them to have with people with disabilities to avoid any potential for allegations of exploitation/abuse
- Develop comprehensive training for staff and people with disabilities on sexuality, personal safety and healthy relationships...*what is OK and not OK*
- Provide information to families on training available for staff and ask for their personal input on ideas to help educate their son/daughter



## INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

- All incidents should be reviewed by an agency's Incident Management Committee on a regular basis for them to identify potential trends and to recommend improvements on how similar incidents can be avoided in the future
- Learn as much as possible about risk management/risk reduction systems which can be applied within your agency.
- Ask staff for their concrete suggestions on ways to reduce the risks that may occur for individuals supported by the agency
- Track incident free days and communicate that information within the organization...assess the possible reasons why there were no serious incidents
- Determine the *Primary Cause* of serious incidents and brainstorm with people involved how things could have been handled differently to prevent the incident....communicate this information to others within the organization
- Identify which providers have the fewest Med Errors and talk with them about their policies/procedures and then consider implementing their systems
- Publicize trend information from Incident Management Committees and develop a strategies to address priority areas
- When an incident occurs or is averted, identify the reasons and share that with the people who are responsible for implementing daily functions (*don't keep the information at a management level*)
- Monitor and track individual medical errors to identify causes, trends
- Learn from mistakes/challenging situations...*what could have been done better*
- Set up "*debriefing sessions*" after major incidents to discuss outcomes, what we have learned, etc.
- Look for potential hazards in homes and day programs...organize Safety Committees....make this part of the discussion in staff training
- Utilize Root Cause Analysis or other similar processes to determine the specific causes (active, latent, proximate) of any major incident



## SYSTEMS/MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- Identify the potential safety issues within environments people live/work/socialize
- Talk PROACTIVELY about prevention of serious incidents

- Include *TRAINING* on the agenda for all staff meetings...ask people what they have attended, what they have learned and how they will apply that knowledge to their jobs...determine mechanism for management to be informed about this information
- Determine strategies to think creatively about how to reinforce the training people attend and the broader context to understand how critical their actions are to the safety and quality of people's lives
- Implement advanced planning for activities...brainstorming/thinking about what could happen in order to prevent setting up bad situations for people receiving supports
- Implement fair and consistent disciplinary action with any staff person involved in abuse...demonstrate that abuse is not acceptable and that immediate disciplinary action will be taken for purposeful abuse or other serious human rights violations
- Concentrate on developing "*Preventative Policies*" which include procedures and protocols to avoid serious incidents (this could include everything from seat belting to medication) and make the staff aware on a regular basis of these policies and procedures as a Standard of Daily Operation (*not just stuck in a manual*)
- Provide people with disabilities with identification cards or cell phones/other resources to use for an emergency/safety planning
- Ensure that CPI is reviewed on a consistent basis (quarterly, semi-annually, or annually) for all staff, not just for those working with people with known aggressions
- Include an emphasis within initial interviews for people applying for jobs a focus on the policies of the agency to promote human rights and to not tolerate abuse
- Form an internal Safety Committee to be responsible for being proactive about potential safety hazards
- Walk the talk and expect the same from ALL employees
- Empower employees at all levels to be proactive in identifying areas for improvement and enlist their support in resolutions.
- Do everything to make the notion of *Protecting People From Harm* a fundamental part of the fabric of the agency that any action or inaction that didn't consider that notion would be so obvious that it would be easily identified and rectified.
- Assure appropriate staffing levels for people which are safe and have a back up plan to maintain these levels.
- Interventions for certain unsafe behaviors of people can be planned and practiced.
- Pay attention to medical information and health issues.
- Always include the person and their family, as appropriate, when talking about his/her life plans.
- Incidents (serious and otherwise) are sometimes caused by "*distracted care giving*". Involve Direct Support Professionals (DSP) to act in accordance with the importance that their role is in the delivery system. DSP's need to understand they are the *most important element* of the system.

- DSP staff need to understand their role is in a partnership in implementing the mission of the agency to keep people safe
- Identify more strategies to assist people with communication issues to be able to communicate better
- Don't place people together who do not get along in living arrangements or day programs
- Improve visibility of Human Rights Committees in the agencies
- Assure that staff are not working too many shifts and have appropriate time off
- Try to make a real difference with preventing incidents....Identify the three leading causes of incidents within your agency, develop strategies to prevent similar incidents from occurring, track progress and then disseminate findings
- Check out the website [www.qualitymall.org](http://www.qualitymall.org) and research information from other states



## COMMUNICATION

- Ask people with disabilities their ideas on preventing incidents
- Ask direct support staff their ideas on preventing incidents
- Ask family members their suggestions on how to reduce/minimize incidents
- Maintain ongoing communication with the “*right person*” from the agency whether it is the nurse, administrator, etc. so staff are aware of who to call and have access to TA when they need it
- Make risk management an issue of very high priority at ALL levels of the organization.
- Recognize individuals publically for any and all contributions to the cause.
- Publicize the mission of “*Protecting people from harm*” at every opportunity.
- Learn from mistakes made with various incidents and publicize up front aspects of that information, as appropriate, to staff to prevent a similar situation in the future
- Publicize the names of specific people to contact to report any serious concern...staff and families need to be able to access to individuals and telephone numbers at various times of the day/weekend
- DSP staff need a voice directly to the top administrator(s)...a process for people to communicate in non threatening ways information that they are concerned about...creating environments where staff are comfortable in reporting incidents or potential incidents



## ACCOUNTABILITY

- Assure the necessary policies and procedures are in place to minimize risk of harm for people with disabilities and through strong information management communicate to employees on a regular basis strategies for implementing these policies and sharing information on “*Best Practices*”
- Provide administrative staff with the appropriate management training to be “good supervisors/leaders”

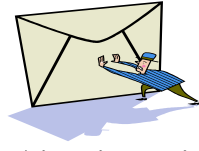
- Review information generated from the results of investigations or from trends identified through Incident Management for quality improvement purposes and share information about action taken with employees of the organization
- Utilize the tools of Performance Evaluations to document areas of concern with each staff and *follow through* on the necessary training or action needed to address concerns....work with managers to identify “*red flags*” involving employee behaviors/actions
- Utilize the “*Probationary Period*” new staff have to terminate individuals who may not belong working in the DD field
- Develop specific protocols for staff to use to address certain situations to minimize incidents such choking, seizures, bathing, feeding safety etc.
- Hold staff accountable for the progress or lack thereof that people with disabilities are making or not making
- Complete thorough background and reference checks for anyone applying for a job within the agency.
- Avoid failing to address problems. Consequences can be far reaching.
- Improve fiscal oversight of people’s money, banking, shopping, collection and tracking of receipts, etc.
- Ensure comprehensive human resources practices are in place for appropriate screening and hiring of new employees
- Develop individualized safety plans for people with disabilities



## REGULATIONS/POLICIES

- Write clear MHRH Licensing regulations that include more specific requirements to address health and safety issues and prevention of abuse
- Develop agency policies to complement the licensing regulations and provide ongoing education to staff about their responsibilities to comply with the regulations
- Include the goal of protecting people from harm in vision and mission statements of the agency
- Identify a method for determining staff awareness of various policies....have staff document they have reviewed each policy, as necessary, ...have a form included in personnel record which is signed by the individual
- Write clear agency policies to communicate expectations to staff
- Write specific fiscal accounting policies and procedures re: the management of people’s funds
- Establish specific policies and procedures for staff to follow to collect receipts and organize information on money spent for each individual

## SHARING OF EXPERIENCES/INFORMATION



- Share experiences/situations with other agencies and what you learned
- Develop a newsletter/informational bulletins to share information with agencies/providers on Best Practices, lessons learned, establishing safe environments, prevention ideas, information from other states, comments from families and people with disabilities, Incident Management Committees, trends, etc.
- Identify the various options available for disseminating information learned...newsletter articles, web site, letter/flyer to all agencies, discussion groups, email news, individual topic Bulletins, etc.
- Talk with leaders of other organizations about their strategies for preventing incidents and implement similar practices
- Check out various websites from other states and national organizations on ideas for preventing abuse

For more information on the *RI Quality Consortium* contact Sue Babin, Chairperson, DDD, at 401-462-3234.